

## **The Planting of One Seed Pollinates the Surrounding Fields**

*Inroads Centre, Cardiff*

On a drizzly Sunday afternoon, sat on a coach hurtling from London to Cardiff, I tried to preempt the day, the directions and conversations. In anticipation, I 'mapped' the directions on my phone and the small blue teardrop blinked and directed me to the outskirts of the city center and towards Riverside. Riverside was an area that held few reference points for me and zooming in and out of the map while bumping along the M4, I recalled them:

1. This was the first place my granddad settled having immigrated from Hong Kong to Cardiff.
2. Trips would be made especially to Cardiff to visit the Chinese teahouses in Riverside. We would regularly pass a terrace house; the windows and the front door were entirely boarded up and scrawled with large capital black letters. At a young age, I had little idea what the words meant other than I thought the person who wrote the words felt angry and upset. At that age, it was frightening to think someone could be so upset.

I found myself in the area of Riverside and on the corner of Neville Street and Lower Cathedral Street. Gradually the group arrived and comprised of artists, architects, spouse and slate miniature dogs, we entered the designated building. *Inroads* is a building designed for drug rehabilitation founded by the directors Mags and Aewelyn and while this is a centre that offers support and a service, it did not *feel* or look like a centre. Under the vision of Mags and Aewelyn, the space is given the same considerate as that of a home.

Making a home for someone you've yet to meet, for someone whose face is unfamiliar, whose laughter lines have creased from different situations and whose sadness maybe incomprehensible could be vastly foreign or unnervingly similar. Making a home for a stranger is a challenge. More familiar to create comfort for those we know, those accepted and vetted by the ties of family and friends.

Inevitably a society governed by the logic of capital makes victims of those most vulnerable. If we are honest with ourselves, we are all vulnerable whether that is on economic, social, emotional or racial terms and when we meet a stranger's vulnerability, indirectly we meet our own. When we stop looking after the wellbeing of those in need then it exposes everyone to the unthinking logic of commerce. As an unstable structure teetering on the brink of collapse, it exploits us all. A parasite, it eats away at the core, inside out; it chews without discernment or conscience.

*'What we do at Inroads is simple but it's not easy'*

Mags and Aewelyn

This short but precise sentiment echoed as we toured the building and the rooms unfurled spaces for acupuncture, art, music, cooking, music and a terrace for gardening. The aesthetic of the environment and the placement of furniture was not just a decorative afterthought but an expression of care and hospitality. From the colour of the chairs, the proximity of the communal table to the sink (in preventing the dripping of teabags from one place to another), the donated furniture from local people and department stores and most poignantly, the decision to allow free access into the rooms without the need of entry card access.

While Mags and Aewelyn may not immediately be immediately understood as the architects of *Inroads*, they embody the principle that architecture should empower people. To echo the sentiment of Paul Treweekes, an architect of our group; architects may build boxes but architecture does not happen automatically but rather it is dependent on people looking after the social process of architecture. Architecture is abstract as it is physical as location is rooted in memories, recollections and conversations, the intangibility of place is half the construction.

While buildings may physically claim space, it is people who hold the intimacy of space thus it becoming a place. Echoing the ethos of the artist and socialist William Morris, he advocated that people's wellbeing and fulfillment must come before productivity and commerce. Critics of Morris deemed his socialist ideals towards craftsmanship and creativity to be too idealistic and therefore unachievable. However in the case of *Inroads*, the sentiment of Morris seeps through and architecture is made *for* the people and *by* the people, never underestimate the infectious nature of ideals and really the planting of one seed pollinates the surrounding fields.

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